



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 155

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2009

No. 49

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. EDWARDS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 23, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DONNA F. EDWARDS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, for the past year we have been on an economic roller coaster, with scary turns and falls coming ever faster, making the sinking feeling in the pit of our stomachs even worse.

Along the way, the Federal Government, spurred by the most dire predictions, has taken sweeping actions. Some, like the bailout, I opposed; others, like the Economic Recovery Package of President Obama, I supported.

But action was warranted to help the struggling economy and restore public confidence. Yet we continue to react to part of the problem with partial stop-gap actions.

This week, Congress has an opportunity to deal with the bigger picture and comprehensive solutions as we consider President Obama's budget.

For decades we have been living beyond our means and the environment's capacity to be a dumping ground for toxic waste, and air and water pollution, especially carbon pollution, that is destabilizing the climate, raising global temperature and sea levels, and changing things we rely on, like growing seasons and water supply.

We have been living on borrowed time and borrowed money. The previous administration cut taxes for those who needed help the least, increased spending but avoided long-term investments in education and our infrastructure like roads, bridges and rail.

The day of reckoning is here, accelerated by the global financial meltdown, the causes of which are clearer than the remedies. The sad truth is that the geniuses who figured out how to enrich themselves were clueless about the broader implications. Too much energy, brain power and lobbying has been spent on making money for a few, not on creating underlying economic value for the Nation. We have been left with two starkly different paths: we can muddle on through doing what we have done, only less of it, with a battle over who will take the biggest losses while continuing these past patterns. Given the array of special interests and the history involved, we have a pretty good idea what that path will look like.

The other approach is outlined in the President's budget: tackle comprehensively the challenges of health care, education, the long-term fiscal stability of the United States and global warming and its real costs and danger.

The health care system is the biggest opportunity for savings. We spend more money than anyone else in the world for health care, but ours is a system where Americans are sick more often and die sooner than people in most developed countries and in even some poor ones. It is not just foreign countries that have figured this out, but many American communities provide better health care while spending less money than the Nation as a whole. We as a Nation can do this.

Energy dependence and carbon pollution doesn't just threaten our way of life in the future, it attacks our pocketbook and our communities now. The President's plan will save families money, make America more secure, and protect the planet.

In the middle of the economic meltdown, we shouldn't and we won't raise taxes. But over the long haul, we are going to have to pay our debts and find money for rebuilding and renewing America. There are areas in the budget that point the way, like keeping some portion of the expiring tax cuts on the most well-off and reinstituting the Superfund tax to clean up toxic waste.

Finally, there is the question of tackling unnecessary spending. The President points out agricultural subsidies for the rich agribusiness interests, while shortchanging most farmers and ranchers. There is a way to make more rational our support of agriculture. We need to support him as we all face the question whether Cold War weapons that the military doesn't need, and in some cases doesn't even want, are worth the costs to the American taxpayer.

The path contained in the budget will be the first chance for Congress, the administration, and, most important, the public to weave together the elements of change and reform. There are short-term political risks, to be sure. But the long-term benefits are breathtaking, especially when compared to

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H3709